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IIPV3EBS02\_G18 Futuristic Trends in Social Sciences

**IMPACT OF PRIVATE SCHOOL’S POLICIES ON ECONOMICALLY BACKWARD SECTION DURING PANDEMIC COVID-19.**

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**ABSTRACT: -**

The coronavirus has altered the daily lives of families around the world. The most affected ones are the economically backward classes of the society. When it came to basic survival- food, shelter and health facilities, governments were on toes to provide them. But when it came to basic educational facilities, fees and other resources, it wasn’t on the priority list of the families as they were till some extent unaffordable with little or no income of economically backward sections.

Whereas education being an important expense of maximum families, costed them either their savings or increase the dropout rate of students. Talking about the monthly expenses of economically backward classes, education still takes a step back. Where Government schools waived off maximum fees and took measures like ’Mohalla Classes’, Private schools took little or no effort in waiving off the fees, but increased the expenses of economically backward families by introducing mandatory online classes for which certain gadgets were must. Because of all these collective and simultaneous steps, economy saw sectoral differences. The education sector saw decline and the electronic (gadgets) sector saw a rise in demand, affecting the GDP in different ways.

This research paper basically focuses on the economically backward classes of society which got affected by Private school’s policies during lockdown pandemic of COVID-19, thus making negative(mostly) in the lives of people and a generation suffering with lack basic education.

**KEYWORDS: -** Academic policies, COVID-19, Lockdown, Economically Backward Classes, Dropout rate, Mohalla Classes, Gadgets, Hybrid Classes.

**INTRODUCTION: -**

1. RECENT EDUCATION SYSTEM IN INDIA:

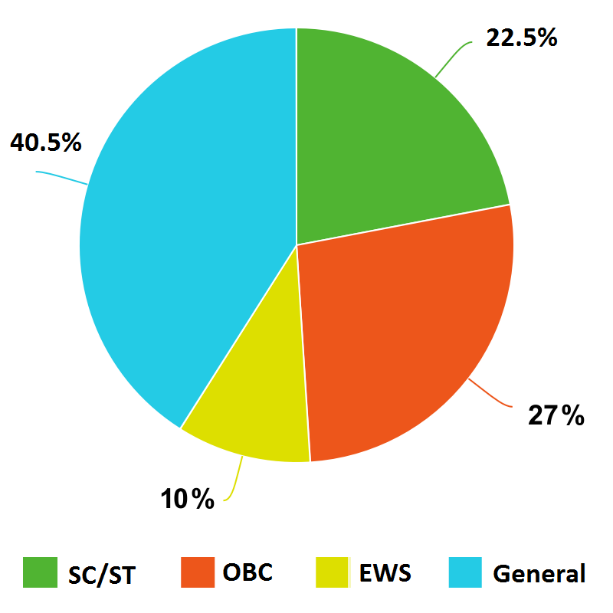
India has a fine mix of government and private schools spread all over the country. Where private schools are run by private hands, individuals, corporate houses or business groups, government schools are run by either central, state or both the governments. According to NSSO (National Sample Survey Organisation) reports, nearly 50% of the students take admission in government schools and the rest nearly 50% students take admission in private schools. Condition of government schools is bettering day by day and has seen a rise in admission rates in the recent years. This is why government schools are able to compete with the admission rates of private schools. On the other hand, private schools have made headlines for the uproar caused by parents and society because of the unwanted and extreme hike in school fees. According to [**National Statistical Organisation**](https://www.drishtiias.com/daily-updates/daily-news-analysis/restructuring-of-indian-statistical-system) (NSO) released report on ‘Household Social Consumption: Education in India’, as part of the **75th round of National Sample Survey (July 2017 to June 2018) stated that -** 77% of the students studying in Government institutions were receiving free education. Percentage of students studying in private unaided institutions and receiving free education was nearly 2% in rural areas and 1% in urban areas.

1. EFFECT OF COVID-19 ON INDIA:

The outbreak of the novel coronavirus has led to mass havoc, fuelling a global health and economic crisis in millions of deaths, lockdown of industries, large scale job cuts and consequential catastrophic income shocks. India being an economically developing country was not at all prepared for COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic brought long lockdowns, employment cut offs, deprived lower economic classes, low or no mobility of labour, crawling economic growth, wages and salaries cut offs, shutting down of industries, closing down of businesses not falling under necessities categories and what not. This led to government announcing and approving various programmes and policies through which it could help and support the citizens to survive and come across the pandemic time period. Not only necessities like food and instant shelter were provided by PDS and other schemes and shelter camps to stop migration, but health facilities were of way more importance to combat and stop the contagious virus spread. This rather being functions of government, costed heavens and did build an unseen debt on government.

1. ECONOMICALLY BACKWARD CLASSES IN INIDA:

The Economically Weaker Section (EWS) is the section of the society in India that belongs to the un-reserved category and has an annual family income of less than 8 lakh rupees. This category includes people that do not belong to the caste categories of ST/SC/OBC who already enjoy the benefits of reservation. People belonging to the Economically Weaker Section since 1 February 2019 now get 10% reservation in education and government jobs of India (vertical reservations) similar to OBC, SC, ST.



Reservations in Central Govt educational institutions and jobs.

NSO Report, 2019

1. EFFECT OF CORONA ON ECONOMICALLY BACKWARD CLASSES:

In India, the lockdown accentuated crisis caused several industries to collapse and shut down, leaving millions of informal workers stranded. A telephonic survey of 4000 workers across 12 states by Azim Premji Foundation (2020) in collaboration with the Centre of Civil Society shows that 80% of the workers in urban areas reported employment loss, while 50% of the remaining reported income losses or even no salary disbursement. The mere loss of jobs is only one aspect of the bigger picture of impoverishment and poverty. One must further delve into the condition of employment and subsequent re-employment. The CMIE report further states that overall, there has been a decline in the condition of employment. The employment (particularly re-allocated one) was not as fruitful as compared to the employment from the pre-crisis times. Workers experienced a decline in the number of working hours and wage cuts in their reinstated jobs. In essence, informality and precarity of the jobs have increased, with nearly half of the salaried workers moving into the informal sector ([Azim Premji University, 2021](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/2455328X211051432#bibr2-2455328X211051432)). As a consequence, there was a fall on an average of 12% in household income during 2020–2021 ([Vyas, 2021](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/2455328X211051432#bibr33-2455328X211051432)). It should be noted here that this is an average figure, and the actual fall of income among the middle and the lower strata is bound to be much higher.

1. EFFECT OF CORONA ON EDUCATION OF ECONOMICALLY BACKWARD CLASSES:

Where survival was of utmost priority, food, shelter and health topped the charts of priorities. Education was at a step back for maximum of families belonging to middle income groups, economically backward classes, low-income groups, and unstable income groups. Only fixed income groups, elite class, economically stable income groups were in a condition to not give a second thought for education even if family budgets were at stake. Expenditure on private school education is a massive component of household income. Close to half the parents, spend over 20% of their income on private school education, a quarter spend between 11-20% and the remaining quarter of the respondents spend up to 10%. This finding is consistent with data from NSSO (2014) which shows that, for a family with a single earning member, the average expenditure on private schooling (for two children), constitutes 20% of household income. When connected and discussed, such families couldn’t afford the regular and hiked private school fees. Ultimately resulting into high dropout rates of students compromising with their education. The exceptional families which tried their best to cope with the hiked fees had to see am disbalance of family budget.

1. POLICIES OF PRIVATE SCHOOLS:

Private schools brought certain policies for the students that were unfavourable for their parents in terms of affordability. Some of them were:

* Hike in annual fees.
* For attending online classes, Laptop and Mobile phones were must.
* Making online classes mandatory in the name of attendance which resulted in higher and costlier internet data consumption.
* Charging lab fees, practical fees, library fees, co-circular activities fees when these facilities were not in use because of lockdown.
* Charging examination fees when according to government orders, no examination was supposed to be conducted.
* When hybrid classes (online + offline classes) started, mandatory offline examination conduction was done where students were either asked to come to school to write examination or write answers from home and submit answer sheets to school on a specific date.
* According to government orders, general promotion was announced but still private schools charged examination fees.
* In some cases, even uniform fees were charged.
* Maintenance fees were charged, which somewhat made sense for sanitizing and hygiene but this fee was hiked and charged.

**REVIEW OF LITERATURE: -**

1. Raj, Utsav and Fatima, Ambreen, (2021), ‘Stress in Students after Lockdown Due to COVID-19 Threat and the Effects of Attending Online Classes’.

As we all know that lockdown has been announced in the county due to coronavirus which has obstructed students in their studies. Therefore, the Education institutes had decided to take online classes which had affected the student's life and their thoughts towards studies. This study is focused on knowing the student's mental condition and Their problems. Not only the students but their family condition is not good this may cause stress in students. In this study, we found that most of the students are mentally stressed in this condition of threat. Most of the students are worried about their study and there not satisfied with the classes which are conducted online.

1. Ramasamy, Dr. Kannamani, (2020), ‘The challenges to the Private School Teachers due to COVID-19 Crisis’.

COVID-19 is affecting most of the countries with an enormous number of cases and deaths. People are impacted by their financial status as many have lost their jobs. In most of the countries, schools and colleges are closed for better social distancing. In India, schools are not operating from Feb 2020 onwards. In this paper, we discuss the lockdown approach, closure of schools and colleges, parent perception of an online class and the government decision on opening schools. Importantly, we discuss the challenges for private school teachers such as employment and salary issues. In addition to that, we argue about the future state of the school teachers if the schools are not opening in the next financial year due to the severity of the COVID-19 disease.

1. Amutha, D. (2020), ‘COVID-19 Epidemic and Its Impact on Economy and Society’.

Coordinated measures are needed to contain this virus, and individuals need to make uncomfortable but important adjustments to their everyday routine in compliance with the government and WHO's advice and suggestions. This would provide medical personnel with more opportunities to intervene efficiently with the limited resources available to them and to purchase considerable time to position additional resources for the managed management of this current epidemic. his research is focused on secondary information obtained from multiple sources such as journal articles, magazines, the internet, newspapers, books and studies published and unpublished by different governmental bodies, non-governmental organisations and the Commission.

1. Jena, Pravat Kumar, (May 31, 2020), ‘Online Learning during Lockdown Period for COVID-19 in India’.

International Journal of Multidisciplinary Educational Research (IJMER), Vol-9, Issue- 5(8), Page-82-92 (2020). COVID-19, as a global pandemic, has called for social distancing. It has made people mandatory to sit indoor and sitting idle indoor may lead to mental stress. Hence to keep people engaged and free from mental stress, online learning can play important role. Online learning is the best solution during this pandemic situation. Teachers can use virtual classrooms to teach from home with all necessary tools which makes the online sessions as effective as traditional ones. Pandemics often compel the learners to stay at home for long period of time and obstruct teaching-learning process. This article emphasizes on how online learning is beneficial during times of crises like work absences or pandemics. Therefore, some tools and techniques for online learning which can ensure the continuity of learning are highlighted. Some emerging approaches of Government of India for online learning are presented. Merits and demerits of online learning platform are also discussed. Perceptions of learners and educators on Online Learning system during lockdown are pointed.

1. Gonzales, Kerwin Paul J., (June 2020), ‘Rising from COVID-19: Private Schools- Readiness and Response Amidst a Global Pandemic’.

IOER International Multidisciplinary Research Journal, Volume 2, Issue 2, pp. 81 - 90 (2020). Schools’ stakeholders are the most affected during this time of the pandemic. They are mostly the ones at a loss and are the ones sacrificing, may it be either academically, financially, or both. The different gathered data aimed to provide clarity on the issues and provide propositions on how to conduct the schools’ organic functions, possibly during and after the pandemic. In this study, a total of 220 participants came from 44 different schools. The study employed a concurrent-triangulation research design in which an online survey was sent to the participants. Also, teachers coming from international schools and schools outside the Philippines were contacted to have them share their experiences in regards to how their schools handle the situation. Lastly, document analysis was also utilized as a data-gathering procedure.

1. Biswas, Bikram and Roy, Sajib Kumar and Roy, Falguni (2020), ‘Students Perception of Mobile Learning During COVID-19 in Bangladesh: University Student Perspective’.

AQUADEMIA, 2020, 4(2), ep20023. The aim of this study is to measures the student’s perception of using mobile for learning during COVID-19 in Bangladesh especially at the university student’s perspective. During the COVID-19 pandemic period, mobile learning may help the students to fulfil the study gap. This study revealed that m-learning is very helpful to recover the study gap during this COVID-19 pandemic time and the findings of this study will help the education policymaker as well as the educational institutions to incorporate mobile learning technology for the whole system where social media may enhance the process of teaching and learning.

1. Raj, Utsav (May 10, 2020), ‘Indian Education System in Fight against COVID-19 Pandemic’. INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS - IJCRT, Volume 8, Issue 7 July 2020.

The Coronavirus pandemic and therefore the ensuing lockdown have forced schools and colleges across India to temporarily shut and this unprecedented move had created an enormous gap within the education bodies despite the central and government doing their best to support for e-learning and online education. Most of the primary and secondary schooling sector was all based on offline education system has to opt the online classes for empowering the education and for the benefits of the students. Many schools within the country have switched to online classes due to the lockdown, but one in four students is unable to attach because they don’t have a laptop, desktop, or tablet, consistent with a survey by economic times.

1. Mesiya, Aisha Yusuf (2019), ‘Factors Affecting Employee Performance: An Investigation on Private School Sector’.

International Journal of Experiential Learning & Case Studies, June 2019. Employees are valuable assets for any organization, and their productivity should be given due consideration, if an organization aims to meet its strategic goals. This can be done through implementation of effective policies for the most contributing determinants of performance of employees. Therefore, this paper studies the factors that affect employee performance significantly, and gauges their direction being positive or negative. The study is based on the case of education sector, specifically the private schools of Pakistan. The sample is drawn from private schools of Karachi, with respondents selected through Convenience Sampling. Conclusively, several recommendations are drawn for the organizations to ensure maximum effectiveness and efficiency of their employees.

1. Kingdon, Geeta Gandhi, (2017). ‘The Private Schooling Phenomenon in India: A Review’. IZA Discussion Paper No. 10612.

This paper examines the size, growth, salaries, per-pupil-costs, pupil achievement levels and cost-effectiveness of private schools, and compares these with the government school sector. Official data show a steep growth of private schooling and a corresponding rapid shrinkage in the size of the government school sector in India, suggesting parental abandonment of government schools.  The paper shows how education policies relating to private schools are harmful when formulated without seeking the evidence.

1. Shah, Parth J. and Shah, Parth J. and Veetil, Vipin P., (2006). ‘Private Education for Poor in India’.

The paper tries to capture the research and understanding along with innovations and policy reforms in assuring quality school education to all, with a particular focus on the poor. It begins with quantitative and qualitative narration of the two most fundamental problems in the education of the poor: Access and the quality. It is hard to escape the conclusion that the role of the government in education is to liberate the supply side, fund the demand of the poor, and monitor the access and quality of education. Let the private initiative and entrepreneurship - for profit and non-profit - govern our schools. Scholarships, education vouchers, and loans would offer the same freedom of choice to the poor as the rich enjoy today. An unshackled and competitive market for education would prepare students to lead a productive and meaningful life.

**OBJECTIVE: -**

* To understand the policies of private schools.
* To understand the economically backward sections of the society.
* To observe the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on the society.
* To research on the effects of policies of private schools on Economically backward sections of the society.
* To analyse these researched effects and bring out feasible suggestions which may help the concerned.

**HYPOTHESIS: -**

* Education is an extended basic need for all human beings.
* Private schools share a good number of admissions along with government schools in India.
* School fees is an important expenditure in the budgets of economically backward classes of India.
* COVID-19 pandemic lockdown brought severe damage in the learning abilities and interest on education.
* Lockdown period was economically bearable for sections of society which are not economically backward.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: -**

Research methodology means the methods and ways used to systematically collect data, organise and present it for further analysis and derivation of conclusions.

Data Collection Method: -

For this research paper, Secondary data is used to study and analyse the effects of policies of private schools on economically backward sections of the society.

Secondary data is collected from NSO website, newspaper articles, magazines, review paper, academic published papers, reports from Azim Premji Foundation (2020,2021), CMIE reports, authorized government online published papers and reports.

Analysed data is presented by pie chart.

**FINDINGS: -**

The economically backward classes of the society had some severe negative impacts of policies defined by private schools. Both parents and students suffered from these effects.

1. Impact on Employment**:**

The ILO-ADB report, titled – ‘Tackling the COVID-19 youth employment crisis in Asia and the Pacific’ said – “Most of the recruitment got postponed due to COVID-19 placements for students may also be affected with companies. For India, the report estimates job loss for 4.1 million youth. Construction and agriculture have witnessed the major job losses among seven key sectors.”. This significantly proves pandemic affecting the economically backward classes more adversely.

1. Hampered Educational activity:

Suspended classes, postponed examinations at different levels and delayed entrance examinations and admission process were the results of total lockdown. Due to continuity in lockdown, students suffered a loss of nearly 3 months of the full academic year of 2020-2, which further deteriorated the situation of continuity in education.

1. Delay in payment of fees:

During lockdown most of the parents of economically backward classes were facing the unemployment situation so they were not able to pay the fee for lockdown particular time periods.

1. Non access to Digital World:

As many students have limited or no internet access and many students were not able to afford computer, laptop or supporting mobile phones in their homes, online teaching-learning created a digital divide among students. The lockdown did hit the poor students very hard in India as most of them were unable to explore online learning according to various reports.

1. Increased responsibility of parents to educate their wards:

Some educated parents were able to guide but some did not/ may not have the adequate level of education needed to teach children in the house.

1. Casual approach towards learning process:

As physical education system converted into virtual education system during the covid pandemic, students became non serious towards studies and examinations.

1. State of mental and emotional breakdown:

Both students and parents had different levels of mental and emotional breakdown as they could not cope up with the fast-changing times in terms of technology, education, earnings, accessibility of resources, and gap in understanding levels of family members.

1. Addiction of mobile phones:

Be it the children or grownups, all are addicted of mobile phones, of which hardly any work is of utility. This has resulted in lack of concentration and desire for studies among children.

1. Wages cut:

Salaries of private school employees were not paid in full and various deductions were made. This led to dissatisfaction amongst teachers and quality delivery of lessons were not done. Also, least interest was shown by the students in attending the classes, which also lead to no quality education despite fees being paid by parents.

**SUGGESTIONS: -**

1. Indian government should keep a strict check on private schools and their constantly changing policies which mostly is unfavourable for economically backward classes.
2. India should develop creative strategies to ensure that all children must have sustainable access to learning.
3. At current times, access to technology and internet is an urgent requirement. So, the digital capabilities and the required infrastructure must reach to the remotest and poorest communities to facilitate the students to continue their education during the pandemics.
4. India needs to be prepared beforehand for any upcoming pandemic.
5. Special attention on education is the need of the hour as the pandemic batch of students have little or no knowledge about academics because of the general promotion policy.
6. No doubt technological advancement is at its peak but the old school way of education i.e., books, chalk and board still have its own significance in the learning process. It needs to be retrieved.
7. Even schools should prepare reserves to pay teachers and maintain some inventory in case of pandemic or lockdowns.
8. Improve enforcement of state orders around fee hikes and setting up of a helpline for parents to report grievances and ensure that they are responded to within 48 hours.
9. Ensure that parents have a role in fee regulation; in Maharashtra, schools can only hike fees after approval from 75% parents.
10. Issue notification to provide children enrolled under Section 12(i)c with devices and free data packs to access digital classes being delivered by private schools.

**CONCLUSION: -**

The study reinforces the fact that private schools are not inclusive spaces since its primarily focuses on fee recovery. It also finds that economically backward section children suffered an interruption in access to education due to the physical closure of schools. In cases where education was ‘delivered’, WhatsApp was the dominant mode, highlighting that the focus was more on information dissemination than teaching. In the absence of low-tech, inclusive modes of education delivery, a large number of parents struggled in supporting their children to access education digitally, with an incapability to pay private school fees proving to be the biggest hindrance.

The economic impact of COVID-19 is likely to be felt over the next few years, particularly in terms of job cuts and a reduction in income across the board. This increases the urgency to regulate private schools so that they become institutions of learning rather than centres of exploitation and loot. When whole world was in dire need of empathy, support and understanding; private schools was nowhere near providing all these. Rather the policies laid by them made a generation suffer for education and left with a mindset of education not being a priority.

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